

# CHRISTIAN ORIENT

A JOURNAL OF EASTERN CHURCHES FOR CREATIVE THEOLOGICAL THINKING

SEPT 2008

VOL. XXIX NO. 3



## SPIRITUALITY

A CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACH TO THE HOLY TRINITY

Dr. Jose Puthiamparmpil

SPIRITUALITY OF THE RAZA IN THE SYRO-MALABAR TRADITION

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THEOLOGY - A CONSTRUCTIVE REFLECTION OF HISTORY

TRIBUTE TO FR. PLACID J. PODIPARA CMI

Dr. Johnson Vadakkumcherry

NEWS

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## Inside This Edition

### **A CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACH TO THE HOLY TRINITY**

103

Dr. Jose Puthiaparampil

### **SPIRITUALITY OF THE RAZA IN THE SYRO - MALABAR TRADITION**

116

Dr. Pauly Maniyattu

### **THE ROLE OF LITURGY IN CHRISTIAN WITNESSING**

124

Dr. Paulachan Kochappilly CMI

### **THEOLOGY - A CONSTRUCTIVE REFLECTION OF HISTORY TRIBUTE TO FR. PLACID J. PODIPARA CMI**

133

Dr. Johnson Vadakkumcherry

### **NEWS**

140

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## Editorial

Christian spirituality is essentially a life lived in the Trinitarian communion. At baptism every Christian is incorporated into the life of the Holy Trinity. It is the participation in the divine life of Trinity that makes one really spiritual. In fact, life of communion after the model of Holy Trinity is spiritual life. That is why the present issue of *Christian Orient* opens with an article on Holy Trinity. Dr. Jose Puthiyaparampil in his "A Contemplative Approach to the Holy Trinity" convincingly exposes how the mystery of Trinity is revealed to us through the economy of the Son and the Spirit, i.e., Incarnation and Pentecost. Prayer or contemplation is seen as entering into the eternal divine conversation that exists among the three Persons of the Trinity also known as *perichoresis* or mutual indwelling. He gives a beautiful explanation of the famous icon of Andrei Rublev as well.

If baptism initiates one into the life of Holy Trinity, the Eucharistic celebration nurtures one in that life. We encounter the three Persons of the Trinity with awe and admiration in the Holy Qurbana. The self-effacing love of these three Persons is experienced in the re-enactment of the Mystery of the Messiah celebrated on the altar. Dr. Pauly Maniyattu's article, "The Spirituality of the Raza in the Syro-Malabar Tradition" analyzes the important characteristics of the spirituality

of Raza from the perspective of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana. Christian spiritual life is living the faith celebrated in the Eucharist. True Christian spirituality according to the author is an attempt at translating the experience of the salvific encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist into the concrete life of the believer.

In the article that follows, "The Role of Liturgy in Christian Witnessing", Dr. Paulachan Kochappilly CMI enlightens us on how the liturgy is the celebration of our own Christian existence. He equates spirituality with Christian witnessing and considers it from the perspective of liturgy in general and Eucharistic celebration in particular. Christian liturgy for him is a sharing of our redeemed and redeeming existence and experience in Christ which is the sacramental presence of the Lord in the Church for the world.

Dr. Johnson Vadakkumcherry pays tribute to Dr. Placid Podippara CMI through "Theology - A Constructive Reflection of History". Dr. Placid is an ecclesial visionary who contributed much to the unity and identity of the Thomas Christians in India. Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil wrote on the occasion of the tenth death anniversary of Dr. Placid: "The age of the Fathers has ended. But to our Church he remains one in the line of the Fathers".

**Dr. Andrews Mekkattukunnel**  
**Section Editor**

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# A Contemplative Approach to the Holy Trinity

*Dr. Jose Puthiaparampil*

## Introduction

A number of books have appeared in the recent past trying to explain the mystery of the Trinity. Whether they deal with the Patristic understanding of the doctrine or the present theological perspectives, a merely intellectual approach or discussion is the usual procedure. The outcome is a well - exposed doctrinal study. This article is a humble attempt to have a contemplative approach to the Triune God, who is beyond all intellectual enquiry and even contemplation. In spite of our daily liturgical worship in which the Holy Trinity is adored and praised through a number of liturgical rites and prayers, especially through the 'Trisagion', the awareness of the presence of the most Holy Trinity remains alien to us. Instead of a constant awareness of the presence of the Triune God within our hearts, we have only an intellectual knowledge of God. The theology of the Trinity remains a dead doctrine to be confined to theological manuals.

There can be two approaches to the theology of the Holy Trinity. On the one hand it can be an explication of the doctrine in clear theological terms as found in monographs and manuals. On the other it can be reduced to a kind of pious theology without any doctrinal basis. Can there be a middle way between these two? That remains the aim of this study. The doctrine of the Trinity should be clear to

us and it should remain, by all means, in our constant awareness, in our daily undertakings.

## 1. Accessibility to the Trinity Through A Life Growing in Grace

It is the unique teaching of Christianity that God is 'God in Trinity'. In this perspective Christianity has a quite different vision from its sister religions Judaism and Islam. In both these religions the personal plurality in God is out of question. According to Christian faith God is essentially God in Trinity. It is through liturgical worship and prayer that the Church initially commemorated the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The beginning and end or the sum and substance of Christian theology is that God (of the New Testament) is God in Trinity, although the term hardly occurs in the sacred Scripture. God is at the same time One and Three. In this sense St Athanasius can say that in the Trinity, theology finds its completion. However a well-ordered or scientific treatment of the subject is not to be seen in the writings of the Fathers for the reason that God is beyond all scientific investigation, conceptual knowledge and definitions. That is why the Fathers of the Church preferred to have an apophatic approach to theology in general and to the Trinity in particular. Apophatism is the negative way of contemplating the Trinity. It is not to say that we are ignorant about God

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but it is the awareness that God is beyond all human conception<sup>1</sup>. In this properly eastern approach to the Trinity "proceeding by negations one ascends from inferior degrees of being to the highest, by progressively setting aside all that can be known in order to draw near to the unknown in the darkness of absolute ignorance"<sup>2</sup>. This is the way of mystical contemplation leading to union with God<sup>3</sup>.

The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be confined to the interior relationship among the three equal persons. The traditional Trinitarian discussion often went along this line. What we badly need is not a correct logical understanding of this relationship which always remains a mystery beyond grasp, but an active participation in divine life. This is only possible through an understanding as to what God has done for mankind or what God has revealed to us through the Son and the Spirit. All our explanations are, of course, humble and inadequate words about this ineffable mystery. If we are to speculate we will land up in misconceptions. This is what happened to many thinkers of the past who initiated heresies. The Fathers of the Church with their wisdom and prayer from time to time purified the doctrine of the Trinity from all heresies and in course of time carefully formulated it.

Our knowledge of the mystery of the Holy Trinity is based on the revelation of God

to mankind. In order to relate to the world the loving and lovable God revealed Himself through the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is through God's revelation in history, that is, through the Incarnation and the Pentecost that we come to know the unknowable God. Therefore it is right to say that the doctrine of the Trinity is revealed to man though the economy of the Son and the Spirit. This divine economy is that which we celebrate through liturgical worship and this is the content of theology<sup>4</sup>. Even before theological formulations, faith in the Trinity appeared in liturgical texts. The life of a Christian who daily participates in these mysteries should be filled with the grace of God and hence life in the Trinity means a life cooperating with the grace of God.

Therefore, the knowledge of the Trinity cannot be reduced to a few hours in systematic theology in the course of our spiritual formation. It should be the subject of a life long search through study, deep experience in personal prayer and above all through the liturgical worship of the Church. Therefore, it can be rightly said that the theology of the Trinity is not only a theme for our study and reflection, but also the most sublime reality, which we should constantly search through contemplation. We should be prepared for a change of attitude. We should share our deep experience with others and we are called to

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Kallarangattu, *Prarthanayude Niyamam Viswasathinte Niyamam*, (OIRSI Publications, Kottayam 1994), 87-88. Hereafter Joseph Kallarangattu, *Prarthanayude Niyamam Viswasathinte Niyamam*.

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir N. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (St Vladimir Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1976), 25. Hereafter Vladimir N. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir N. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 27-28.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Kallarangattu, *Prarthanayude Niyamam Viswasathinte Niyamam*, 93-94.



bear witness to this ineffable Truth. This is where we should find our ultimate destiny, a reality into which finally we should merge. Therefore the Holy Trinity should be the subject of our daily meditation<sup>5</sup>. "The Trinity is ..... the unshakeable foundation of all religious thought, of all piety, of all spiritual life, of all experience"<sup>6</sup>. Every branch of theology in the East owes its origin to the doctrine of the Trinity<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. The Holy Trinity – The Model of Self-Emptying Love

The mystery of the Trinity is not a matter of speculation but it is the living presence of God experienced through prayer. However, in contemplating the mystery we meet with a difficulty that cannot be easily overcome. In our contemplation it is easy for us to visualize the Father and the Son because these concepts are subject to our imagination. In the matter of the Spirit He is known only through symbols namely air or wind, water, fire or tongues of fire, dove and oil - the five traditional symbols to denote the presence of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit remains the unimaginable person among the three. In other words He is practically known as a 'power' rather than a person. (Only Andrei Rublev in his Icon of the Trinity pictures the Spirit as a distinct divine person side by side with the Father and the Son. This will be discussed in

detail later). In all other cases the Spirit is pictured more as a power having no personal identity. This difficulty in conceiving the Spirit as a person is not only our difficulty. It is also notable in the history of pneumatology.

In fact the best way to conceive the Trinity is through prayer and contemplation. The true experience of the Trinity is possible only when we can experience Him in a personal encounter – when we as persons who are intimately known to God encounter the three persons in the Trinity in awe and adoration. No philosophical speculation has ever succeeded in comprehending this great mystery. Therefore the best approach to the Trinity is through doxology and silence<sup>8</sup>.

St. Gregory Nazianzen in his 5<sup>th</sup> theological oration on the Holy Spirit gives us an insight into the gradual evolution of Trinitarian revelation in sacred history. The Old Testament proclaimed the Father plainly but the Son in a more obscure fashion through types and prophecy. The New Testament revealed the Son openly and explicitly but no more than hint at the Godhead of the Holy Spirit. At the third and final stage, the era of the Church in which we live, the Spirit dwells among us manifesting Himself more clearly<sup>9</sup>. Thus the revelation of the Trinity finds its fulfillment through three stages in the life of the Church.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Kallarangattu, *Prarthanayude Niyamam Viswasathinte Niyamam*, 96.

<sup>6</sup> Vladimir N. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 65.

<sup>7</sup> Patristic Trinitarian Theology, which is very rich in its contemplative approach, is the subject matter of another research. Therefore, it is not included in this study.

<sup>8</sup> Kallistos of Diokleia, "The Human Person as an Icon of the Trinity", *Sobornost*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (1986) 7.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *The Fifth Theological Oration on the Holy Spirit*, XXVI, NPF 2<sup>nd</sup> Series 7: 326



St John says that God is love<sup>10</sup>. Drawing inspiration from the statement of St John, Kallistos Ware in an article gives a valuable insight of Richard of St Victor concerning the relationship among the three persons in God. Since God remains a mystery beyond all definitions the divine mystery can only be defined in negative way. God is communion of love among three persons. In both divine and human realms *love* remains the perfection of nature and the most sublime reality. In our day - to - day life it is clear to us that genuine love remains a transforming experience. It is that same love which brings us very close to God. Selfless love expresses the perfection of divine nature as opposed to human self - love. Love is a gift and an exchange and to be present in its fullness it needs to be mutual. It requires an 'I - Thou' relationship and hence a plurality of persons. Personhood finds its perfection in communion. This applies not only to human realm but also to the divine. Love whether it is divine or human is characterized by sharing and communion. The fullness of glory is attained only when there is a sharer in glory. God is not a person of self- love i. e. loving only Himself but persons loving each other. For existing in its plenitude love should not only be 'mutual' but also be 'shared'. The perfection of love is reached when the two persons share their mutual love with the third. When love is perfect the lover not only loves

the beloved but also wishes that the beloved may have the further joy of loving a third, jointly with the lover and of being jointly loved by that third. The sharing of love cannot exist among any less than three persons. Shared love exists when a third person is loved by two other persons harmoniously and in community and the love of the two persons is fused into one affection by the love of the third. In this way, in this interpersonal communion, there is a movement from self-love to mutual love and then to shared love<sup>11</sup>. This remains the summit of perfect love. This Augustinian intuition concerning the relationship of the three persons in the Trinity gives us a valuable insight. Although it is not just to compare our limited human love with the infinite and selfless divine love, this concept of the personal relationship in the Trinity provides us enough matter for our meditation over this mystery. Our 'personal realization' is only possible through genuine, self-less love after the model of the relationship within the persons in the Trinity.

God is love: not self-love but mutual love that is exchanged and shared. God is not only personal but also interpersonal. Love consists in giving oneself entirely to the other. Giving requires a difference in personal properties. Love essentially needs a mutual intimate relationship - an 'I - Thou' relationship - a communion of three persons coeternal

<sup>10</sup> 1John 4,8. The Malayalam word for love, *sneham* signifies a negative definition = *sa + na + aham* = *sneham* = selflessness. Therefore, when John says that God is love this can mean that God is a being in selflessness or God is a being in self - giving.

<sup>11</sup> Richard of St Victor in Kallistos of Diokleia, "The Human Person as an *Ikona* of the Trinity", *Sobornost*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (1986) 9-10.



and coequal<sup>12</sup>. In this relationship there is an entire openness, which is totally transparent and receptive. This is what is meant by the word *perichoresis* or *circumincession* or mutual indwelling. The three interpenetrate one another without separation and confusion that each person contains the other two and moves within them. There is between the persons an eternal conversation.

As we approach God in prayer first of all we experience an emptiness or an obscurity. Then there appears an awareness of prayer and often this is felt as our own self - talk. But it is the Spirit who prays in us. Then we are caught up in the eternal conversation, in the divine conversation among them: i. e. the eternal conversation of the Father with the Son "This is my beloved Son" (Mt. 3:17; 17:5); the eternal conversation of the Son with the Father "Abba, Father, Thy will be done" (Mt. 26: 39) and the eternal conversation of the Spirit with the Father and with the Son "Abba Father" (Rom. 8:15) and "Jesus Lord" (1Cor. 12:3). In this constant self - emptying and mutual glorification the persons in the Trinity realize themselves. Without self - emptying and mutual glorification there is no likeness to the Trinity. Therefore it is just to say that Trinity is a cross for our human ways of thinking<sup>13</sup>.

### 3. Scriptural Basis for a Theology of the Trinity

The evangelist "whom Jesus loved, who was lying close to the breast of Jesus" (John

13:23) at the last supper provides us insights through Jesus' own words concerning the mutual relationship of the three persons within the Trinity. Although the concept of the three persons active in the economy of salvation is present in the thought of the contemplative evangelist, St John, in the early chapters of the gospel<sup>14</sup> it is explicitly stated only in chapters 14 - 16. As a prelude to the exposition of the intimate relationship within the immanent Trinity Jesus prepares them in a special way to receive this sublime Truth. He washes the feet of the disciples and makes them clean (Jn. 13: 1 - 10) and gives them the new commandment, that of loving one another (Jn. 13: 34 - 35) the greatest of all commandments. These are the two essential dispositions, it may seem to us, to contemplate the Trinity since only the pure in heart will see God (Mt. 5:8) and only by loving one another that all men will know that one is a disciple of Jesus (Jn. 13: 35).

In Jn. 14 - 16 Jesus reveals the relationship between the three persons within the Trinity. Jn. 14, 1 - 14 reveals the most intimate relationship between the Father and the Son. Verses 15 - 26 disclose to us the close relationship between the Son and the Spirit.

#### 3.1 The Relationship Between the Father and the Son

Jn 14: 2 says that for every human person created by God there is an eternal place in the house of the Father and Jesus goes to the

<sup>12</sup> Kallistos of Diokleia, "The Human Person as an Ikon of the Trinity", *Sobornost*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (1986) 9-10.

<sup>13</sup> Vladimir N. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 66.

<sup>14</sup> See Ch. 3. In His discussion with Nicodemus Jesus starts with the rebirth in the Spirit (John 3:5) and shifts suddenly to the Son (3: 13) and then to the Father (3: 16 - 17). The conversation with the Samaritan woman comes to an end with worshipping God in spirit and truth (3: 23 - 26). Ch 5 :19 - 30 unveils to us the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son and Ch. 7: 37 - 39 the relationship between the Son and Spirit.



Father to prepare this place. The many dwelling places refer to the many members of the Church on earth<sup>15</sup>, their heavenly dwellings<sup>16</sup>. Once it is prepared Jesus will come and take to Himself those who believe in Him.

V. 6. Answering the doubt expressed by Thomas as to the way to come to the Father, Jesus says that He is the way, the truth and the life and there is no other way to the Father except through Jesus. Jesus is the agent who is God's own Son, who has a relationship to Him in likeness of nature<sup>17</sup>

V. 7 The one who knows Jesus knows the Father. Through knowing Jesus one knows and sees the Father.

V. 8 – 10 To the request of Philip Jesus assures His oneness with the Father i.e. in seeing Jesus the Christian sees the Father Himself. The Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in the Father. This implies the divine *perichoresis*: there is identity in 'essence' or 'nature' or 'will' between the Father and Jesus while they remain two distinct persons within divinity. Therefore the words spoken by Jesus are not His own but of the Father who dwells in Jesus. The words and deeds tell that Jesus is intimately related to

the Father, that they are the works of both the Father and the Son who are one in nature<sup>18</sup>. The Father reveals Himself perfectly through Him, expressing Himself as it were in Him<sup>19</sup>.

V. 12 says that the believer who acts according to what Jesus commanded will perform works of God as Christ did<sup>20</sup>. The believer can ask the Father either through Jesus or he can ask Jesus directly and in any case the request will be granted because the Father wills the same as the Son.

### 3.2 The Relationship between the Son and the Spirit

Jn 14:15 - 17 on the other hand expounds the close cooperation of the Son and the Spirit in the economy of salvation, in accordance with the will of the Father

In V. 15 - 16 Jesus turns our attention to the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity. To those who keep the commandments of Jesus, through the initiative of Jesus, the Father will send the *Paraclete*<sup>21</sup>, the Counselor, to be with them forever. Jesus calls the Spirit "another Counselor". This is to show that He is the first to come to the world in the economy of salvation<sup>22</sup>. *Another Paraclete* has obviously the implication that Jesus has been

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Vawter "The Gospel According to John" in *The Jerome Biblical commentary* ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer Roland E. Murphy (Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1968), 452. Hereafter *JBC*.

<sup>16</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John Vol. III*, (Crossroad Publishing Company, New York), 60. Hereafter R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*

<sup>17</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John XIII- XIX* (Double day and Company, Inc. Garden City, New York), 632. Hereafter Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John XIII- XI*

<sup>18</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John XIII- XIX*, 632-633

<sup>19</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 69.

<sup>20</sup> *JBC* 453.

<sup>21</sup> See *JBC* 453 col. 2. The word literally means advocate, helper, mediator

<sup>22</sup> *JBC* 453.



the first Paraclete<sup>23</sup>. When the time is come, when humanity is prepared to receive the Spirit, He will request the Father to send the Counselor. This word clearly points out the distinct divine personhood of the Holy Spirit and the equality of the Spirit with the Son.

V. 17. The world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth that Jesus sends because it does not know Him. Since Jesus has made known the Spirit to the disciples they know Him and are able to receive Him. Jesus says that the Spirit already dwells in them. Even before sending the Spirit 'personally' on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, Jesus says that the Spirit dwells in them. It is because they are united in Jesus that the hearts of the disciples become the dwelling place of the Spirit. The Spirit of Truth fills them inwardly and remains a lasting help to them in their self-assertion over the world<sup>24</sup>.

V. 18 - 20 Owing to the presence of the Spirit the disciples are not left desolate and by this presence they are able to see Jesus. By a Christian's link with the Holy Spirit he is intimately linked to the Trinity – "I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you". (The Eastern Fathers always see the Spirit as the connecting link between a Christian and God in Trinity where as according to the West, the Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. Although it is Jesus who has assumed human nature and is therefore more similar to man in relationship to God, it is the

Holy Spirit who is the nearest to us in our relationship to God. By remaining permanently in our soul the Holy Spirit carves us in the model of Jesus; He 'christifies' us through the gift of grace). The Spirit glorifies Jesus by begetting children of God after the model of Jesus.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.3 The Holy Trinity Dwells in Every Disciple

V. 21 Those who love Jesus will keep His commandments and thereby they will be loved by the Father and the Son as well, and Jesus will manifest Himself to them. Obedience is the sign of love that enables a person to enter into communion with God<sup>26</sup>

V. 22 – 23 In Answering the question of Judas, Jesus points out the living presence of the Father and the Son in the heart of a believer. Those who love Jesus will keep His commandments and they will be loved by Him. The Father also will love them and both the Father and Son will make their hearts the dwelling place of both. The words spoken by Jesus are not His own but of the Father. The Father will come along with Jesus who reveals Himself inwardly to the disciples, and they will be included in God's community of life and love<sup>27</sup>

Thus if we combine v. 17 in which Jesus affirms that the Spirit dwells in a Christian who is closely related to Jesus and v. 23 by which Jesus assures that the Father and the Son will

<sup>23</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John XIII- XIX*, 644.

<sup>24</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John* 75.

<sup>25</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John XIII- XIX*, 716

<sup>26</sup> JBC 453.

<sup>27</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 81.



dwell in the believers, we can evidently conclude that each Christian's heart is the abode of the Trinity. Thus according to John there is certainly a mention of three types of divine indwelling that of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit<sup>28</sup>.

### 3.4 The Activity of the Spirit in the Disciple

V. 25 says that the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sends in the name of Jesus will teach the disciples all things, in the absence of Jesus. The fact that the Father sends the Spirit on request of the Son, clearly states the close relationship among the three persons. Since it is time for Jesus to ascend to the Father, the Spirit will remind the believer all that have been taught by Jesus, after His departure. Following the glorification of Christ, the Spirit will complete the revelation of Christ, by enlightening the Church concerning the true and full meaning of Jesus event<sup>29</sup>. The Paraclete's mission is the completion of Jesus' mission<sup>30</sup>. He takes what Jesus Himself taught the disciples, but to a deeper level<sup>31</sup>.

Jn 15: 1 – 11 although does not explicitly speak of the relationship among Trinitarian persons illustrates the intimate relationship between Christ and a Christian in terms of the simile of vine and branches. The word 'abide' that expresses a deep intimate relationship between Christ and a Christian recurs in that passage. As the life giving water flows from the stem to the branches so that

they may bear fruit, a Christian has to remain in close relationship with Christ to bear fruit. If one abides in Jesus he can ask whatever he wishes and it will be granted to him. When one bears fruit in Jesus, it is the Father who is being glorified. The foundation of this relationship is basically love.

V. 26 clearly states that the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, proceeds from the Father and comes from Him by being sent by Jesus. This verse points out the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father. (Accordingly the Eastern Fathers generally hold the view that the Spirit proceeds from the Father whereas the West initiated by Augustine holds that the procession of the Spirit is from the Father and the Son.) The Spirit who comes from the Father, being sent by the Son, will bear witness to the Son.

Jn 16:7 – 15 spells out the activity of the Spirit in every Christian. In v.7 Jesus tells that it is to the advantage of the disciples that Jesus goes away. The Counselor will come if only Jesus goes to the Father. Then He will send the Spirit to the disciples. The economy of the Spirit starts only when humanity is prepared to receive Him through the economy of the Son.

The Spirit will convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

The Spirit will convince the world of sin. It is because the world does not believe in Jesus. Here sin refers to the rejection of

<sup>28</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John XIII- XIX*, 643.

<sup>29</sup> *JBC* 453.

<sup>30</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John XIII- XIX*, 653.

<sup>31</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 83.



Jesus. The Paraclete will convict the world of disbelief in Jesus that culminated in the crucifixion of Jesus<sup>32</sup>. St John towards the beginning of the gospel introduces Jesus as the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'. The Spirit gives the conviction that Jesus is Lord. (1 Cor. 12, 3 – 7). If one rejects Jesus' Lordship, in spite of the conviction given by the Spirit, then the Spirit will convict him of sin.

The second conviction is of the righteousness of God because Jesus goes to the Father and the disciples henceforth will not be able to see Jesus anymore. The righteousness of God was conceived by the Jews in terms of Ex. 34: 6 – 7 where God Himself reveals to Moses. There God's righteousness is understood as God's infinite mercy being shown from generation to generation. This infinite mercy was revealed to the Jews, from time to time, through a number of prophets who revealed the plan of God to the people. But the people often rejected the prophets and ill - treated some of them. When salvation would not be attained through their efforts, God sends His only Son. Jesus' obedience unto death resolves the tragedy of the fallen humanity. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the culmination of God's righteousness. Now after fulfilling the righteousness of God, Jesus goes back to the Father. Then the Holy Spirit will make known to the believer of the enduring righteousness of the Father, which is finally

made manifest in the death, resurrection and ascension of the Son. Jesus, who will not be seen any longer by the disciples, dwells with the Father and He is thus seen as righteousness of the Father<sup>33</sup>.

The third conviction that the Holy Spirit grants is of judgment because the ruler of the world is condemned. Until Jesus' death, sin and death reigned over the world. It is Jesus who won victory over sin and death through his unwavering submission to the will of the Father unto death. Jesus encourages the disciples to take heart, because He has overcome the world (Jn 16:33). Henceforth, the Spirit who bears witness to Jesus will convince the disciples that there will be a due punishment for the wicked and a due reward for the just in the world to come. Those who do not believe in Jesus are already judged<sup>34</sup>.

V. 12 states that even towards the end of Jesus' public life there are things that Jesus cannot reveal altogether to the disciples and they must wait for the enlightening activity of the Spirit.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly in v. 13 – 14 Jesus further points out two more activities of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will guide the disciples into the fullness of Truth. Since Jesus Himself is the Truth, the Spirit will guide the disciples into the fullness of Jesus. The Paraclete only receives what belongs to Jesus<sup>36</sup>. It is not on His own authority that the Spirit speaks but whatever He receives from Jesus. He speaks only in terms of what Jesus has already taught. The Spirit will guide the community into the

<sup>32</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John XIII- XIX*, 712.

<sup>33</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John* 131.

<sup>34</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 132.

<sup>35</sup> JBC 456

<sup>36</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 133.



future and make clear to it what is to come. The Spirit teaches nothing new because Jesus has revealed to them all that He has received from the Father. By taking from the teachings of Jesus and giving them to the disciples, the Spirit will glorify the Son. Jesus concludes that all that belongs to Him is from the Father and He will make it known to the disciples. The glorification that the Son has from the Father is continued in the Church through the activity of the Spirit. Jesus' glorification is His being recognized and given the power to complete His work by the Father. The Paraclete participates in the continuation of His saving work and thus contributes to Jesus' glorification<sup>37</sup>.

#### 4. Contemplation of the Trinity Through the Icon of Andrei Rublev

For a contemplative approach to the Trinity the Icon of Andrei Rublev is an invaluable help.

What we have seen in detail in John is well represented in this Icon so that it serves as a good tool for the same.

##### 4. 1 The Relevance of Icons

Since Icons correspond to the sacred texts, biblical, liturgical and patristic they can be extremely useful of our meditation. They are pictorial representations of the teachings of the Church by representing concrete events of sacred History indicating their inner

meaning<sup>38</sup>. They express the teachings of the Church in conformity with the Scripture. This conformity is particularly expressed by the VII Ecumenical Council, which promulgated that Icons can be revered on the same level with the Cross and the Gospels. What the word transmits through the ear, the painting silently shows through the image<sup>39</sup>.



Icons are drawn in an atmosphere of deep prayer. While drawing or repairing, the Iconographer fasts and prays and therefore, it is said that they are not the result of artistic imagination, but the fruit of a deep sense of communion with the divine. The Iconographer lives and thinks in images and reduces the forms to the limits of simplicity, the depth of whose inner context is accessible only through prayer. Like the Cross and the Gospels it is

<sup>37</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 136.

<sup>38</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, "The Meaning and Language of Icons", in Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, (St. Vladimir Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1982), 26 – 27. Hereafter Leonid Ouspensky, "The Meaning and Language of Icons".

<sup>39</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, "The Meaning and Language of Icons", 30.



one of the forms of revelation and knowledge of God in which both divine and human will and action are blended<sup>40</sup>.

#### 4. 2. The Icon of the Trinity of Andrei Rublev

From ancient times the Holy Trinity was depicted in a Historical Bible scene with the angels sitting at the table under the oak tree and Abraham and Sarah as servers<sup>41</sup>. The present one was drawn in 1410 by the Russian mystic, Andrei Rublev. The Icon of the Trinity is a very graceful one and therefore, it is considered as inspired by the Holy Spirit. This Icon expresses the deep communion within the three in the inclining of the heads and the postures of figures enclosed in the circle. The inner life uniting the three figures enclosed in the circle and communicating itself to its surroundings, reveals the inexhaustible depth of the picture. The identical face of the figures emphasizes the single nature of the three divine persons. It reveals symbolically the unity and Trinity of the Godhead by showing its triune action in the divine economy. The character of each person is definitely expressed with regard to His action in world<sup>42</sup>. "This Icon, with its inexhaustible content, its harmonious equilibrium of composition, majestically calm figures of the Angels, light, joyous summer colours could be the creation only of a man who had stilled in his soul all agitation and doubt and was illumined by the light of knowledge of God"<sup>43</sup>

A number of detailed explanations have already appeared in different languages with different view - points and conclusions. This is one of them that magnificently coincides with what we have seen already<sup>44</sup>. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are the distinct divine persons in the Trinity who remain one owing to the oneness in nature. In the Icon the first figure on the left is the Father, the second figure in the middle represents the Son and the third figure on the right denotes the Holy Spirit.

##### 4.2.1 The Theology of Trinitarian Communion

The first figure, the Father is positioned straight since He is the origin of all things. His hand is placed in an act of blessing above His knees pointing towards the Son. The Son receives the direction of the Father in obedience and blesses the cup, but the movement of the hand is towards the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit places His hand in such a way that He accepts the will of the Father and the response of the Son. Thus the circular movement of love within the persons in the Trinity that begins from the Father, passes to the Son, reaches the Spirit and returns to the Father. The Father invites us to concentrate not on Him. His hand is placed in such a way as to point to the Son as if He is telling, "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him". Here we see the self - emptying love of the Father who finds His greatness in the glorification of the Son.

<sup>40</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, *"The Meaning and Language of Icons"*, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, *"The Meaning and Language of Icons"*, 201.

<sup>42</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, *"The Meaning and Language of Icons"* 202.

<sup>43</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, *"The Meaning and Language of Icons"* 204.



The second figure in the Icon, the Son is pictured as sitting a little higher than the first and third figures. This shows the state of the glorified Son. This glorification is bestowed upon Him by the Father for His complete submission to the will of the Father even up to death on the Cross. The Son is the glory of the Father. The Father reveals His will to the Son and the Son finds His joy not in carrying out His own will, but the will of the Father. He unceasingly listens to the Father and acts in perfect accordance.

The third figure in the Icon is the Holy Spirit. It is the merit of Rublev's Icon that the Holy Spirit is pictured equal in dimension to the Father and the Son. The Spirit is no less than the other two persons. The Son sitting in the middle, bows down to the Father turning our attention to the Father and at the same time, blesses the cup according to the will of the Father. However, the movement of His hand is in the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Son in His turn draws our attention to the Spirit. The Spirit in turn turns to the Father and the Son. The position of the Spirit is in such a way that He also, like the other two persons, draws our attention not to Himself but to the Father and the Son. The Spirit listens to the Son and what He hears He declares to the disciples. The Spirit declares us that Jesus is Lord (1Cor. 12: 3) and thereby makes us sons of the Father and co- heirs with Christ.

Thus all the three persons glorify each other and their life is perfect unity. Here each person finds His fulfillment by self - emptying and extolling the glory of the other two. This is the Trinitarian circle of love and communion.

#### 4.2.1.1 The Characteristics of Each Person

The colours used in the Icon illustrate the characteristics of each person and thereby contribute to the theology of the Icon. The colours of the first figure, the Father, are purple and blue. The purple colour of the outer robe of the Father depicts His eternal glory as Godhead. It reveals the royal nature of the Father. The personal characteristic of the Father is to be the source of everything. The inner garment is blue. Blue reminds us of the infinite height of the sky and immeasurable depth of the sea. Thereby the blue colour of the garment reminds us of His divinity, which is unlimited. But it appears hidden and this shows that we are unable to know the Father directly. The Father is made known only through the Son and the Spirit. .

The colours of the second figure, the Son, are red and blue. The inner garment is red, which signifies Christ Incarnate and His sacrificial death. The outer garment is again blue which represents His divinity. The yellow vestment on the shoulder denotes the priestly power bestowed upon Him by the Father as the Saviour of mankind, for the remission of the sins of humanity.

The colours of the third figure, the Spirit, are green and blue. The outer garment is green, which signifies the life -giving nature of the Spirit. The Spirit is life – giver. The inner garment is again blue which signifies His divinity. To those who receive Him He bestows a new life.

All the three figures carry a rod of equal length as that of a shepherd or of a pilgrim.



God is like a good shepherd who looks after His flock.

Behind or above each figure there is a symbolic representation, which denotes their role in the work of salvation. Behind the third figure, the Spirit, there is a wind that blows in the direction of the second figure. The wind, the Spirit, leads everyone who receives Him towards the Son. Behind the second figure, the Son, there is a tree, the tree of life. It is through the tree of life, the Cross, that salvation is open to man. Behind the first figure, the Father, there is a house, the dwelling place of the Father. These symbols signify that life in the Trinity is essentially a life, which starts with life in the Spirit. The Spirit will lead each person to Christ and through Christ one can reach finally in the dwelling place the Father.

The three persons when they spread their wings close the space in between them. This is the realm of inner Trinitarian life into which no created being has entrance. The only

gateway into the Holy Trinity is only at the front, through the space in between the two figures. This space is in the form of a cup or a chalice. When we advance further we see the cup on the table blessed by all three persons. The table cover is also drawn in the form of a cup that contains the figure of the Son fully. We are called to participate in the life of the Trinity through a participation in the cup. This signifies that it is only possible to enter into communion with the Holy Trinity through a life of *kenosis*, a life of self – emptying.

We are called not to remain as silent meditative spectators, but as real participants in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity is not only a model for our spiritual life but we are called to live in an intimate union with the three. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. As the three persons are actively present in us, so we are called to live in them. That has to be the end of our contemplative approach the Trinity.





# Spirituality of the Raza in the Syro-Malabar Tradition

Dr. Pauly Maniyattu

Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar teachings of the Church view the Christian spirituality as essentially based on liturgy, especially on the Eucharist. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Second Vatican Council's constitution on liturgy, speaks of liturgy as the summit to which the entire activity of the Church is directed and the source from which all her power flows (SC 10). This is all the more true about Eucharist, which is the source and summit of Christian life (LG11). According to *Sacramentum Caritatis*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI, "Eucharistic celebration appears in all its power as the source and summit of the Church's life."<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II speaks on the importance of Eucharist in the life of the Church: "The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened."<sup>2</sup> Christian community is built up and is sustained by the Eucharist. The Second Vatican Council's decree on the ministry and life of priests points to the relation between the celebration of the Eucharist and the building up of the community: "No Christian community can be built up which does not grow from and hinge on the celebration of the most holy Eucharist"

(PO 6). *Sacramentum Caritatis* expresses the deep conviction that the members of all Churches should follow an eucharistic spirituality: "The Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived "according to the Spirit".<sup>3</sup>

The life of the Christian is nothing but living the faith celebrated in the Eucharist. The faith proclaimed in liturgy has to be lived in the ordinary life of the Christian. Thus the true Christian spirituality is the attempt of translating the experience of the salvific encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist into the concrete life of the individual Christians. This spirituality may be called the eucharistic spirituality. In the East Syriac tradition this spirituality is the spirituality of the Raza since the Eucharist is seen in this tradition essentially as the celebration of the Raza (mystery) of the Lord. Christian life is one of participation in the mystery of Christ. According to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, it is through the liturgy that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the Church" (SC 2). In this article we may analyse the important

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<sup>1</sup> *Sacramentum Caritatis* (SCar) 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> SCar 77. Cf. *Rom* 8.4ff.; *Gal* 5.16, 25.



characteristics of the spirituality of Raza, especially from the perspective of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana.<sup>4</sup> In the first part of this study we shall see the meaning and significance of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana as the celebration of the Raza of Christ. The second part will discuss the possibilities of extending the celebration of the Raza to the life of Christians.

## 1. Eucharist is the Celebration of the Paschal Mystery

Eucharist is the commemoration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, namely his passion, death and resurrection. The celebration of Eucharist makes present the victory and triumph of Christ's death.<sup>5</sup> In 1Cor 11.26 Paul speaks of Eucharistic celebration as the proclamation of the Lord's death. The East Syriac title 'Raza' for the Eucharistic celebration highlights the fact that the Eucharist is the celebration of the mystery of Christ. Since the term Raza is concerned about the celebration or commemoration of the mystery, it is closely associated with the term 'anamnesis' (commemoration or memorial). The eucharistic commemoration has its

foundation in the command of the Lord. The phrase in the anaphora of Addai and Mari (AM) "as we have been commanded"<sup>6</sup> confirms this.

The liturgical texts and the commentaries explain the mystery of the death and resurrection of our Lord as the mystery commemorated in the Qurbana: "...rejoicing and glorifying, commemorating and celebrating this great awesome, holy, vivifying and divine mystery of the passion, the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."<sup>7</sup> According to St. Ephrem, in Eucharist we partake in the entire historical and eternal reality of Christ. Eucharist is nothing less than the entire eschatological mystery of Christ taking place here and now in history.<sup>8</sup> In Theodore's view, we are celebrating the death of our Lord through the awe-inspiring service of the mysteries.<sup>9</sup> In Theodore's vision the commemoration of the death of Christ and the communion of his body and blood constitute the core of the Eucharist as instructed by Christ.<sup>10</sup> Narsai points to this commemoration when he speaks

<sup>4</sup> Though the Syro-Malabar Qurbana is of the East Syriac tradition, there are some considerable differences in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana from the Chaldean and Assyrian versions of the same East Syriac Qurbana.

<sup>5</sup> Council of Trent, Session 23; Decree on the Holy Eucharist, ch. 5. This text is cited in SC 6.

<sup>6</sup> Third g'hanta of AM. *The Syro-Malabar Qurbana: The Order of Raza*, SMBC, Trivandrum 1986; Revised version ad experimentum 1989 (= *Raza*), 42. Cf. also fourth g'hanta of AM (*Raza*, 44); third g'hanta of the anaphora of Theodore (AT) (J. Vadakkal, *The East Syrian Anaphora of Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia*, OIRSI, Kottayam 1989, 87); fourth and fifth g'hantas of anaphora of Nestorius (AN) (S. Naduthadam, *L'anaphore de Mar Nestorius*: Edition critique et étude, UDD, Institut Catholique de Paris, Paris 1992, 250,255).

<sup>7</sup> Fourth G'hanta, AM (*Raza*, 44). Cf. the third g'hanta of AT (Vadakkal, *Anaphora of Mar Theodore*, 87); the fourth g'hanta of AN (Naduthadam, *Anaphore de Nestorius*, 250).

<sup>8</sup> E. Beck, "Die Eucharistie bei Ephrem", OC 38 (1954) 54.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore, *Eucharist*, 103.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, A. Mingana, ed. & trans., WS 6, Cambridge 1933 (= Theodore, *Eucharist*), 107.

of the celebration of the mysteries.<sup>11</sup> The Church commemorates the Lord's death and resurrection by the mysteries.<sup>12</sup> In the Eucharist the Church depicts the glorious mysteries mystically.<sup>13</sup>

The whole Eucharistic celebration may be seen as a series of repeated commemorations of the paschal mystery of Christ. Such a concern seems to be prominent in the commentaries too. Therefore, while commenting on the epiclesis, which according to the Eastern liturgies, is a significant prayer with regard to the change of the mysteries, commentators like Narsai, Gabriel Qatraya and Yohannan Bar Zo'bi enthusiastically talk about the commemoration of the mystery of resurrection.<sup>14</sup>

The reality of the repeated commemoration of the paschal mystery is the characteristic of the Christian liturgy. Within a celebration of the East Syriac Eucharist we may see consecutive repetitions of the memorial of the paschal mystery. In fact the 'Glory to God in the highest' at the very beginning of the celebration<sup>15</sup> may be considered as a summary expression of the entire Christ event. It is very often considered the commemoration of the nativity of Christ, especially because of the angelic hymn.

However, for the East Syriac celebration the rite of introduction has a steady pattern of commemoration. It includes the commemoration of the Old Testament waiting for the coming of the Messiah and also the already realized coming of the Messiah. In the earlier tradition the descent of Christ symbolized by the procession from sanctuary to bema was at the time of the onitha d' qanke. The *marmitha* (set of three psalms) recited before the onitha d' qanke represents the mystery of the OT phase of the waiting for the Lord.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it is difficult to think that 'Glory to God', which precedes the *marmitha*, is just commemorating the nativity of Christ.

The rite of introduction and the liturgy of Word together commemorate the entire mystery of Christ. According to the commentators of the East Syriac Qurbana, the gospel processions between the sanctuary and bema, together with the rites in connection with the reading, celebrate the central mysteries of the Christ event, the incarnation, the earthly ministry, the teaching of the Lord, the passion, death, resurrection and ascension.

The preparation for the Qudaša (anaphora) has a full commemoration of the paschal mystery. According to the commentators, the preparation of the mysteries on the

<sup>11</sup> Cf. "Homily XVII: An Exposition of the Mysteries" in Narsai, *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, R.H. Connolly, trans., Texts and Studies 8, Cambridge 1909 (= *HomMyst*) 1,2,8,9,10.

<sup>12</sup> *HomMyst* 2.

<sup>13</sup> *HomMyst* 1.

<sup>14</sup> *HomMyst* 20. Cf. Gabriel Qatraya, "Interpretation of the Offices", P. Podipara, trans., in G. Vavanikunnel, ed., *Homilies and Interpretations on the Holy Qurbana*, Changanacherry 1977 (= Gabriel Qatraya, "Interpretation"), 97; Yohannan Bar Zo'bi, *Explanation of the Divine Mysteries*, T. Mannoorampampil, trans., OIRSI, Kottayam 1992 (= Yohannan Bar Zo'bi, *Explanation*), 40-41.

<sup>15</sup> *Raza*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Gabriel Qatraya, "Interpretation", 89-90.



both gazzas and their transfer to the altar with the accompaniment of the onitha d' raze, their placing on the altar and covering them with veil (šošapa) and finally removing the veil, symbolize the passion, death and resurrection.<sup>17</sup> When the preparation of the mysteries is seen as the commemoration of the passion and death, there is no difficulty in understanding the expressions like body and blood occurring during the preparation.<sup>18</sup> There are persons questioning the relevance of such a proleptic language at this context. The terms 'body' and 'blood' during the preparation may be seen from a different perspective. Since the preparation of the mysteries is the time of the commemoration of the mystery of passion and death of the Lord, the bread and wine may be called body and blood in the sense that they symbolize the body and blood of the Lord during his passion.

Theodore considers the transfer of Mysteries as the passion procession. Christ is being led to his passion by the invisible host of ministry represented by the deacons. The placing of the Mysteries on the altar represents the placing of Christ in the sepulchre. The linens spread on the altar by the deacons represent the burial clothes of our Lord. Homage is shown to the body lying on the altar by the deacons standing on both sides. Once the Mysteries are on the altar, the reference is to the burial and consequent guarding by the

deacons as angels.<sup>19</sup> Narsai has almost the same interpretation of Theodore with regard to the transfer of Mysteries, seeing it as a passion procession. According to him, the veil over the Mysteries signifies the tomb stone.<sup>20</sup> According to Gabriel Qatraya, the 'onitha is the mystery of the ineffable praises the holy angels and the souls of the Just offered at the hour when they entered into Paradise with the soul of our Lord. (Ref.)

The Qudaša (anaphora) has a full commemoration of the paschal mystery. The anamnesis in the fourth g'hanta proclaims that the Eucharistic celebration is the commemoration and celebration of the entire paschal mystery of Christ. Thus epiclesis, the culmination of the Qudaša commemorates the resurrection.<sup>21</sup> Again the rite of fraction and consignation repeats the commemoration of the passion, death and resurrection.<sup>22</sup> Thus the whole paschal mystery is once again commemorated. Theodore comments on the consignation as follows: "And with the bread he (the priest) makes the sign of the cross over the blood, and with the blood over the bread and he unites and joins them together, in order to reveal to all that although these elements are two, they are nevertheless one in power, and are the remembrance of the death and the passion that affected the body of Our Lord."<sup>23</sup> Narsai also speaks of this rite. He emphasizes the symbolism of their unity of

<sup>17</sup> P. Maniyattu, *Heaven on Earth: The Theology of Liturgical Spacetime*, Rome 1995, 232-238.

<sup>18</sup> *Raza*, 23-24.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore, *Eucharist*, 86-87.

<sup>20</sup> *HomMyst* 4.

<sup>21</sup> Maniyattu, *Heaven on Earth*, 246-254.

<sup>22</sup> Theodore, *Eucharist*, 105; *HomMyst* 23; Gabriel Qatraya, "Interpretation", 99.

<sup>23</sup> Theodore, *Eucharist*, 105.

Being. According to Qatraya the rejoining of the body and blood is “the mystery of the return of His soul into his body and of his resurrection from the dead. For, the priest mystically vivifies the body by the work of the Spirit.” (Ref...) According to Narsai, receiving Communion in hands (in the form of the Cross) symbolizes participation the death and resurrection of the Lord.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. Uhdana and Dukhrana of the Raza

An important feature of the commemoration in the East Syriac Qurbana is that it is the commemoration of the entire mystical body, and hence of the head and the members. Christ and his paschal mystery are commemorated along with the church, his body, now formed in the Eucharistic celebration. Here members of the earthly and heavenly Church are remembered. The priest, therefore, makes special remembrance of the members of the Church as in the following phrases: “this people who look for and await your mercies”, “all the departed and who have been severed and have gone forth from among us”.<sup>25</sup>

There are two Syriac terms in the Qurbana corresponding to the English word commemoration: *uhdana* and *dukhrana*. The word *uhdana* is used for the memorial of

events. The memorial of the Passover event in the Old Testament is *uhdana*. In the Church the commemoration of the paschal mystery of Christ is a similar *uhdana*. The word *dukhrana* is used for the cultic commemoration of persons. Liturgy celebrates the *dukhrana* of the mother of Christ, saints, departed brethren, and the living ones. The East Syriac Taksa insists on the use of the term *uhdana* while referring to the remembrance of the mystery of Christ, and *dukhrana* while referring to the remembrance of the members of the Church.<sup>26</sup>

The Eucharistic liturgy has various occasions making the ‘dukhrana’ of the living and departed members of the Church.<sup>27</sup> The dyptics<sup>28</sup> containing such a detailed dukhrana, therefore, has a significant place within the anaphora where the paschal mystery of the Lord is commemorated. The dukhrana of the Mother of Christ, and other saints are all such a way inevitable in the liturgy. The commemoration (*dukhrana*) of the Fathers and the Just, seen in the fourth g’hanta, and the commemoration of the hierarchy and all categories of the members of the Church in the kušapa before the fourth g’hanta,<sup>29</sup> therefore, very well agree with the commemoration (*uhdana*) of the paschal mystery of the Lord.

<sup>24</sup> *HomiMyst* 28.

<sup>25</sup> *Raza*, 42.

<sup>26</sup> *Ordo Mysteriorum: Cum Prima Sanctificatione Id est Sanctificatio Beatorum Apostolorum Mar (Domini) Addai et Mar (Domini) Mari Praeceptorum Orientis. Iuxta Usum Ecclesiae Syrorum Orientalium Malabaris*, Editio Typica, Rome 2003, pp.29, 30, 31,37,39,40.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, New York 1988, 111.

<sup>28</sup> *Raza*, 36.

<sup>29</sup> *Raza*, 42-44.



The intercessions in the Eucharistic liturgy are to be understood in the context of the memorial of the paschal mystery.<sup>30</sup> The intercessions have an important place in the Eucharistic prayers of the Church. Even though it is not found in the primitive prayers, later all the anaphoras began to give a remarkable place to it. We find intercession in the liturgies commented on by Theodore and Narsai. Theodore does not give the content of the intercession in detail. He simply stated that the priest offers supplication on behalf of all those, for whom by regulation mention is always to be made in the Church, and also for the dead.<sup>31</sup> In Narsai there is a lengthy commemoration of the members of the Church, living and dead, just and the sinners, and even of the "heathens, gainsayers, and those in error".<sup>32</sup> This commemoration is found in close relation with the commemoration of the Lord's passion, death and resurrection.<sup>33</sup> In the Anaphora of Addai and Mari (Mar Ešaya text), too, a similar commemoration, and intercession for peace and for all the Church are found in relation to the commemoration of the mystery of Christ.<sup>34</sup> Anaphora of Addai and Mari and Anaphora of Theodore have the intercession

in the kušapa before the fourth g'hanta and in the fourth g'hanta.<sup>35</sup> The intercessions are found in the Anaphora of Nestorius in the fifth kušapa and the fifth g'hanta.

Now there is a growing tendency of including intercessory prayers of strictly personal nature. As Alexander Schmemmann remarks, such prayers will be the cause for "an utterly individualistic and utilitarian understanding of Church worship".<sup>36</sup> The individuals of the Church are to be seen in the body of the Church and their lives with all joys and worries are to be seen in the mystery of Christ. The appellation Raza tells us that the eucharistic celebration is an invitation to place ourselves in the body of Christ and see our lives as part of the mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord.

The commemoration of the paschal mystery being the primary concern, the East Syriac liturgy as a whole is not much concerned about the 'when' and 'how' of the change of the mysteries, a question extremely significant to the scholastic theologians. Eucharist in the East Syriac tradition is the anamnesis of the death and resurrection of the Lord which enables us to embrace the

<sup>30</sup> The East Syriac tradition insists on celebrating the dukhrana of the saints, the glorified members of the Church, along with the mystery of Christ. Thus the East Syriac liturgical calendar does not have a separate sanctoral cycle. The special commemoration of the saints and the departed ones in the season of Denha, the season commemorating the manifestation of the Lord is much significant in this sense. The saints and the departed ones are commemorated as the ones who were instrumental in manifesting the mystery of Christ.

<sup>31</sup> Theodore, *Eucharist*, 105.

<sup>32</sup> *HomMyst* 18-20.

<sup>33</sup> *HomMyst* 20.

<sup>34</sup> B.D. Spinks, *Prayers from the East*, Washington DC, 1993, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Vadakkal, *Anaphora of Mar Theodore*, 87-90.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 111.

mystery of death and resurrection in our lives (1 Cor 10.16). Eucharist is therefore the mystery of death and resurrection embraced by the believers.

### 3. Participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ in Life

The title Raza tells us that the Eucharistic celebration is an invitation to place ourselves into the body of Christ and to see our lives as part of the paschal mystery of the Lord. The *Raza* of the Lord is nothing but our *Raza*. Here we are reminded of the beautiful words of St. Augustine: "So if you yourselves be the body of Christ and his members, then on the Eucharistic table lies your own mystery."<sup>37</sup> The *ubdana* of the paschal mystery involves the *dukhrana* of the mystery of the entire body of Christ.

The liturgical commemoration of the paschal mystery of Christ helps us to participate in the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. The body and blood, the sacred symbols of eucharistic celebration invite us to participate in the sacrifice of Christ. The blood of Christ is indeed the reminder of his death and sacrifice for us. Hence sacred blood in the eucharistic celebration is a strong invitation to have a life of sacrifice even to the point of dying with Christ. It is unfortunate that today in the rite of communion very often the sacred blood is not administered to the faithful. It is not proper to dilute the symbolism of the rite of communion in the name of large assemblies and limited time.

The participation in the mystery of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ is a challenging invitation to accept the cross in life. The cross which is but a symbol in liturgy becomes a reality in life. The sufferings in life like sickness, death, tensions etc. and the sufferings caused by other people are the different forms of one and the same cross of Christ. The Eucharist enables us to give the cross a meaningful place in our life. Eucharistic spirituality accepts the suffering and joy of life as participation in the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. This spirituality is one of the new existence of the mystery of Christ lived in the Church.

The spirituality of Raza in the Syro-Malabar tradition consists in the identification of the mystery of the believers with the mystery of Christ. The celebration in liturgical space-time prepares the ground for the true identification of human mystery with the paschal mystery of Christ. In the tradition of St. Thomas Christians there was an essential relation between the celebration of liturgy and the life after liturgy. The mystery of the cross was continued in the life of the believers. Thus the spirit of suffering was an essential aspect of the spiritual life of Thomas Christians. Observation of fast and abstinence was very important in their lives. The missionaries spoke of them as lovers of fasts.<sup>38</sup> They fasted on the fixed days and observed abstinence on the Wednesdays and Fridays the whole year round.

<sup>37</sup> St. Augustine, *Sermo* 272 (PL 38.1217).

<sup>38</sup> J. Chalassery, "The Spiritual Life of the St. Thomas Christians (Mar Thoma Kristyanikal)", in P. Pallath, ed., *Catholic Eastern Churches: Heritage and Identity*, Rome 1994, 294.



A good example of the application of the spirituality of Raza is the life of Bl. Alphonsa. Her life was very much identified with the mystery of Christ that she enjoyed the cross and prayed for more and more experience of the cross in her life. She told the Mother General of the Congregation: "Pass on to me your sufferings. Am I not, in any case, a child of suffering? It is a source of joy and peace to me."<sup>39</sup> She wrote to a priest in 1944: "I have already told you that if I pray, the response will be more and more crosses. When crosses cease to appear, you may conclude my prayers are growing less. I believe that love and fortitude increase in direct proportion to the number of the crosses."<sup>40</sup> When the bishop of Changanacherry asked her how she succeeded in passing the never-ending sleepless nights, she replied simply: "I Love."<sup>41</sup> It is the mystery of the cross that gave true meaning to the life of Bl. Alphonsa.

Embracing the cross in the ordinary life is the essential characteristic of the spirituality of St. Thomas Christians. In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Benedict XVI speaks on the necessity of embracing the mystery of Christ in our personal lives. "The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving."<sup>42</sup> Paul in his Letter to Romans makes it clear that a true sacrifice is one in which their bodies are presented as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is the spiritual worship" (Rom 12.1). The liturgy of Syro-Malabar Church envisages that the believers who participate in the celebration of the mystery of Christ should be ready to participate in the paschal mystery of Christ. The history of the St. Thomas Christians tells us that for them Raza was just not something celebrated in liturgy, but it was a decisive element of their spirituality.



<sup>39</sup> K.C. Chacko, *Sister Alphonsa*, Bharananganam 1948, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. 2000, 63.

<sup>40</sup> K.C. Chacko, *Sister Alphonsa*, 49.

<sup>41</sup> *Namakaranam Thirukeramangal*, Liturgical Committee, Kottayam 2006, 25.

<sup>42</sup> SCar 11.

# The Role of Liturgy in Christian Witnessing

*Dr. Paulachan Kochappilly, CMI*

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम् पूर्णतू पूर्णमुदश्चते  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवाशिष्यते ।

The word «liturgy» originally meant a «public work» or a «service in the name of/on behalf of the people». In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in «the work of God» (CCC 1069). It is a public work and not a private business. It is a community act, an ordered and organised work. This work is worship. It is not just a priestly worship, but also prophetic proclamation and kingly service.

According to Vatican II, «the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows» (SC 10). It is the source and summit of Christian life. The Eucharist is the «centre and summit of the Church's life» (EE 31). This event to be effective, «it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and that they cooperate with heavenly grace» (SC 11).

Liturgy is the authentic official and communitarian response of the faithful to the call of God in Christ through the Spirit as the Church. It is, in fact, «a celebration of what we are, a celebration of our own Christian existence» (V. Pathikulangara, 1998, 5) and the Eucharist is the source, strength and summit of Christian life. Through the divine sacrifice

of the Eucharist, «the work of our redemption is accomplished» and it is through the liturgy, especially, that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church» (SC 2). Sacred Liturgy is «the authentic involvement and participation of the man of today in the mystery of Christ and in the history of salvation» (V. Pathikulangara, 1992, 11). It is the celebration of the mingling of earth and heaven, human and divine, cosmic and eschatological, time and eternity, past and future merging in the present.

What follows is a reflection on the role of liturgy in Christian witnessing under three interrelated insights: i) as you celebrate, so you live; ii) as you worship, so you witness; and iii) as you see, so you act.

**IASYOUCELEBRATE,SOYOU LIVE**  
**यथा आचरति तथा जीवति**

To my mind, this is the principle of life and celebration. Knowingly or unknowingly, everybody follows this fundamental truth. And celebration is the fountain, force and focus of life. So also life is the source, strength and summit of celebration. This is the foundational thought that guides me in elaborating the



reflection on the role of the liturgy in Christian witnessing. *Lex orandi lex credendi*, as people worship, so they believe.

### **1. "Let all the people on earth know that You alone are the true Father"**

In the fourth g'hantha prayer, we are given to understand the missionary task of the worshipping assembly. The core of the witnessing is to make the world know about the work of redemption in Christ. In heralding the good news, the celebrant puts forward the gist of missionary mandate of every Christian, "Let all the people on earth know that You alone are the true Father, and You sent Your beloved Son Jesus Christ. May all the people know that Christ, our Lord and God, in His life-giving gospel, came and taught us the way of purity and sanctity" (Qurbana, 56). It is a joyful sharing of the truth. It is the communication of the content of one's contentment and concomitant commitment. The liturgy, on the one hand, requires the faithful from within to announce the mystery of salvation and, on the other, enables people to preach the good news by providing an enlightened experiential context of the mystery of faith. The prayer establishes the genealogy of the missionary nature of the Church. It begins with the sending of Jesus Christ. It is continued by the work of the Holy Spirit through "apostles, martyrs and confessors, doctors and bishops, priests and deacons, all the children of the holy Catholic Church who have been signed with the living and life-giving seal of baptism" (Qurbana, 56). This reiterates the missionary character of the Church and the responsibility of every baptised is retold and reaffirmed. As the Son

was sent by the Father, so also the Church is sent by Christ. As the Son shared his experience of the Father, so also the Church has to communicate her experience of the Lord, which is an invitation to communion and commitment.

The liturgy portrays Jesus as the "light of the world, the teacher and master of mankind, come to enlighten all the people of the world, especially our brethren in India with the spirit of the Gospel" (Qurbana, 80). In the liturgy, we come across the mission of the Church, "Let all mankind receive grace and truth from Your divine Son and praise You in the Church which is the sacrament of life and salvation" (Qurbana, 81). This means to "love our neighbours and to comfort the afflicted in the spirit of being the children of God" (Qurbana, 87). Furthermore, the congregation invokes the blessing of the Lord, "to spread Your divine light across the world" (Qurbana, 87). All what is undertaken in the Church is to lead people "to light from darkness, to truth from falsehood, and to life from death" (Qurbana, 92). That is to say, following the path of Christ, who is the light, we have to be the light of the world.

### **2. "Through Your infinite mercy, You have made us worthy"**

To be the ambassadors of Jesus Christ is a gratuitous gift from God. Therefore, the assembly is always grateful for this immense blessing. The meaning of the word 'Eucharist' explains the depth and breadth of the reality. Every Eucharistic liturgy is a remembrance and celebration of the work of God in redeeming humanity and the world. This is beautifully brought out in the first g'hantha

prayer. "Lord, Our God, we thank You for the abundant graces You have showered on us. For, though we are sinful and weak, through Your infinite mercy, You have made us worthy to be ministers" (Qurbana, 46). Utter helplessness of the community is revealed in the prayer of the celebrant, "Though I am a sinner, Your mercy You have made me worthy to offer You the glorious, life-giving and divine mysteries" (Qurbana, 45) and "Regard not the multitude of our sins, nor anger at the depth of our evilness" (Qurbana, 46). In witnessing to Christ and the salvation in Him, we are only ministers and not masters. In other words, we are servants and not the Lord, "Lord, forgive the sins and offences of Your servants" (Qurbana, 64).

### **3. "Worthy of honour from every mouth, thanksgiving from every tongue, and praise from every creature"**

The congregation is well informed about the ground for witnessing. In the second g'hantha prayer, "Blessed Trinity is worthy of honour from every mouth, thanksgiving from every tongue, and praise from every creature" (Qurbana, 50). It illustrates also the reasons for thanksgiving, "For, in Your great kindness You created the world and everything in it, and showed humanity Your immense mercy" (Qurbana, 50). The liturgical gathering is convinced of the right and duty to glorify the Lord, "May we also glorify You and praise You unceasingly in Your Church, crowned like a spouse with every goodness and grace. For You are the Lord and Creator of all forever and ever" (Qurbana, 24). This alludes to the urgent attention to be given to the contemplation of the mystery and the beauty of the

universe and orchestrating the cosmic symphony by acknowledging the Lord as the Creator of all. It is echoed in the antiphon of the prayer of Our Father, "Our Father in heaven, heaven and earth are full of Your glory, angels and people sing out Your glory, holy, holy, holy are you" (Qurbana, 15). In the Christian witnessing, the attitude and approach to the world should be one of respect and reverence and not exploitation and destruction.

### **4. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant"**

The way of witnessing is delineated in the third g'hantha prayer. It is the way of Jesus, our Lord and our God. Walking the way of the Lord is a challenge and a privilege of the missionary, "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Qurbana, 52-53). Washing the feet of the disciples is scandalous but supreme symbol of service involving self-sacrifice. This is the way of the Lord. Jesus vividly and candidly expounds the act, "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13: 14-15). It is to this sacrificial love, Jesus refers when he gave the new commandment, "I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have love you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13: 34-35). The way of the missionary is the path of kenosis, "To make us share in Your divine life, You assumed our human nature" (Qurbana, 54).



The mind of Christ should shape the thinking pattern of the evangeliser. These gestures of Jesus and the re-enactment of the same in the liturgy shall mould the mind of the disciple of Christ in carrying out the good news. This means that to be a missionary is to be a minister, a servant after the example of Christ.

The word of the Lord shall be the charter of the herald of Christ. The word is the expression and extension of the person. Jesus said, "This is my body which is broken for you for the forgiveness of sins" (Qurbana, 53). The missionary is asked to understand the significance of these words and follow the path of the cross for the salvation of the world. The command of Jesus, "Do this in memory of me" (Qurbana, 54), should motivate and direct the missionary to commit oneself totally and fully to the glory of God and for the welfare of the world.

##### **5. "Let there be praise, honour, thanks giving and worship to You"**

The whole purpose of evangelisation is the glorification of God, the sanctification of human beings, and the transformation of the whole world. One of the oft repeated expressions is "Let there be praise, honour, thanksgiving, and worship to You, to Your only begotten Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now, always and forever" (Qurbana, 65). To offer glory and honour, thanksgiving and worship to the living, holy and life-giving name is the goal of creation. This is beautifully brought out in the angelic hymn, "Glory to God in the highest... Peace and hope to people on earth" (Qurbana, 13). The very purpose of evangeli-

sation is to give glory to God in heaven, peace on earth and hope to human beings. This is the sum and substance of salvation. The Liturgy, at its very outset, informs the assembly to understand the right perspective on salvation and invites the community to work for the full flowering of the dispensation in Jesus Christ. Every missionary, therefore, is challenged to walk the way of peace and work for the establishment of it through restoring hope to human beings. This is the guarantee that we are giving glory to God.

##### **6. "May this Qurbana grant us remission, forgiveness, hope and new life ..."**

Jesus inaugurated His public ministry by proclaiming, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near: repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). The call to conversion is a prerequisite to belong to the kingdom of God. In continuity with the mission of Christ, the Church faithfully carries on the invitation for conversion and reconciliation. Conversion is the primary step in obtaining remission of debts and forgiveness of sins. The Eucharistic liturgy is a sacrament of reconciliation. This is what we notice all through the celebration of the Qurbana. The epiclesis of the Qurbana beautifully presents the theme, "May this Qurbana grant us remission of our debts, forgiveness of our sins, great hope in the resurrection of the dead, and new life in Your heavenly kingdom with all those who have found favour in Your presence" (Qurbana, 57). The same prayer is found at the moment of fraction (Qurbana, 63).

At the time of distribution of communion, the celebrant pronounces, "May the Body and Blood of Christ be unto the forgiveness of sins and eternal life" (Qurbana, 69). The Church is commissioned to carry out the mission of Christ, which includes an invitation of people to forgiveness of sins, as a necessary prerequisite to belong to the reign of God. The rite of reconciliation in the Qurbana provides the faithful to experience the gift of forgiveness and to be heralds of forgiveness of sins. Evangelisation, to be worthy of its name, should address the need for forgiveness of sins. Evangelisation has to challenge the evil structures of the society through a call to the change of the heart of the people.

### **7. "For the whole world"**

The celebration of the Qurbana is for the whole world (Qurbana, 46). The missionary mandate in the gospels is directed to the whole world (Matthew 28:29; Mark 16: 5). So also the liturgy is for the whole world, "For temperate climate, plentiful harvest, prosperous year, and the well being of the whole world" (Qurbana, 35). On another occasion, the deacon announces the purpose of the liturgy, "For peace on earth and for Your merciful blessings and prosperity in all the seasons" (Qurbana, 47). In the prayer of sealing, the celebrant makes this theme very clear, "May He bestow His mercy and blessings on us, on the whole world, and on the holy Church and all her children" (Qurbana, 77). So too the proclamation of the good news should reach out to the whole world and should direct towards its full flowering in the presence of the Lord.

### **8. "Let peace flourish in our midst, and tranquillity in our hearts"**

The goal of Christian evangelisation is life in its fullness, peace and happiness. In the celebration of the liturgy, the celebrant implores, "Let peace flourish in our midst, and tranquillity in our hearts" (Qurbana, 66). Many a time, the celebrant greets the congregation with the salutation of the risen Lord, "Peace be with you" (Qurbana, 34, 47, 67). The assembly is asked to exchange peace to one another in the love of Christ (Qurbana, 47). In the fourth g'hantha prayer, there is an entreaty, "Grant us Your peace and tranquillity all the days of our lives" (Qurbana, 56). The mission of Jesus was to establish peace on earth. And the glad tiding at the nativity of the Lord contains and communicates the truth of peace. Therefore, the end of evangelisation is peace, the flourishing of everything and everyone in the world, whereby we are assured of the glorification of God.

### **9. "To offer You good fruits everyday"**

Evangelisation is intended to bring forth the fruits of transformation through a process of information and configuration. The liturgical celebration beautifully presents the desired transformation. It is a comprehensive transformation that the liturgy visualises and actualises. This is the impression that one gathers from the thanksgiving prayer proper to the faithful. The whole person undergoes a change according to the spirit of the prayer. A strong determination for a holistic transformation is traceable in it: strengthen the hands to offer good fruits everyday, the lips to praise God, the ears to hear the voice of salvation, the eyes to behold the blessing of



the second coming, the tongues to speak truth, the feet to walk in the land of light, body to live the new life and the love of God to reign in the congregation.

### 10. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ."

The Pauline blessing formula (2 Cor 13: 13) is used more than once (Qurbana, 49, 64) in the liturgy of the Qurbana. This gives an idea of the guiding and governing spirit of the community. It is the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ, the creative love of the Father and the transforming fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which constitute the ethos of the Christian community. The liturgical addition, "now, always and forever," to the Pauline blessing formula is very relevant since all the faithful are reminded of the truth of the community here and now and they are asked to live the mystery of the holy Trinity. It is, indeed, a privilege to the Christian worshipping community. So also it is a challenge for the liturgical assembly to be and to become a living and life-giving sign of the saving compassion of the Lord, supporting love of the Father and the sanctifying company of the Holy Spirit in the Church for the world.

### 11. "Clean hearts and pure conscience"

The celebration of the Qurbana invites and instructs us to be of "clean hearts and pure conscience" (Qurbana, 44). This is a requirement for a meaningful and joyful Christian life and its celebration. In the very first oration of the Qurbana, the community is informed about the need to have "clean hearts and pure thoughts" (Qurbana, 17). In the rite of reconciliation, the deacon urges the

faithful, "Let us purge our conscience of dissensions and conflicts" (Qurbana, 64). At the time of the communion, the celebrant implores, "Purify our conscience with the abundance of Your grace" (Qurbana, 68). And this is a task of every Christian and especially in the ministry of witnessing in a world which is increasing corrupt at every sphere of the society. And the Psalmist reminds the congregation about what is to be done in order to please the Lord, "Whoever walks without blame, doing what is right, speaking the truth the heart" (Qurbana, 22). In this sense, in the nursery of the liturgical celebration the community is not only instructed to be just, but also is inspired and initiated to walk blamelessly before the Lord and the people in the world.

## II. AS YOU WORSHIP, SO YOU WITNESS

### यथा भजति तथा भवति

Worship is a witness, for worship presupposes the communication of, communion in and concomitant commitment to the mystery remembered, re-enacted and relived in the congregation. There is the live transmission of values in the liturgical celebration. It is not mere cerebral knowledge, but integral and experiential. It addresses human person as a whole and feeds all the senses within the context of the community so as to evoke adequate responses to the challenges of the time. Liturgy is an epiphany of the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation. It takes into account the apostolic experience and transmits the age-old tradition of the Church to its participants. It is a witnessing to others as well. Imbued with the mystery of the Eucharist, participant begins

thinking, talking and walking in a manner corresponding to the thoughts, words and ways of the celebration. According to Vatican II, in the liturgy “the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church” (SC 2).

As we worship, so we work. Worship, in this sense, is fundamentally a work – work of the Lord. It is the redemptive work of Christ through the Holy Spirit for the glory of God. The wonderful work in the worship is to be carried on and carried out marvellously and meaningfully in our life. The daily work of the community should be shaped in such a way that it resembles the nature, structure, symbols, gesture, posture, prayers, etc. of the worship. In this sense we can find the inherent relationship of the truth, goodness and beauty of the liturgical worship – essentially a work; work as an extension of the worship. John Paul II attached great importance to the witnessing dimension of the Eucharist. He wrote that the Eucharist is “both the source and summit of all evangelisation, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit” (EE 22). He went on reflecting the mystery of the Eucharist and the ministry of evangelisation, “Once we have truly met the Risen One by partaking of his body and blood, we cannot keep to ourselves the joy we have experienced. The encounter with Christ, constantly intensified and deepened in the Eucharist, issues in the Church and in every Christian an urgent summons to testimony and evangelisation” (MND 24). Focusing on the rite of dismissal in the Liturgy, John Paul II observed, “The dismissal at the end of each

Mass is a charge given to Christians, inviting them to work for the spread of the Gospel and the imbuing of society with Christian values” (MND 25). The liturgy to be successful in evangelisation, the Pontiff also highlighted the needed disposition and preparation, “For this to happen, each member of the faithful must assimilate, through personal and communal meditation, the values which the Eucharist expresses, the attitudes it inspires, the resolutions to which it gives rise” (MND 25).

### III. AS YOU SEE, SO YOU ACT

#### यथा पश्यति तथा करोति

As you see, so you act. It is a simple but significant truth. The Sacred Scripture bears also witness to the importance to sensorial perception to have the knowledge of something. Jesus witnessed to what he had experienced of the Father, “I declare what I have seen in the Father’s presence” (John 8: 38). The apostles continued to witness, “We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us, . . . We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete” (1 John 1: 3-4). Indeed, we are called to witness to the transforming presence and experience of our Saviour Jesus Christ. It is, primarily, the Christ-experience that is to be transmitted for the transformation of people and the world. Remember the command of the Lord, Love one another as I have loved you so that the world will come to know that you are my disciples

The phenomenal change in the lifestyle of contemporary times, to a great extent, is due to the advancement of audio-visual



techniques in the advertising industry. They leave lasting impressions on human mind. The media make use of the visual and audio means to make things look appealing in order to sell their product. The fast changing fashions are the fabrications of the media. A celebration of senses is the key to the advertising and marketing companies. One starts to like a thing at the first look of a thing. Then, begins to love it. As a next step, one wants to have or live it. In other words, a process of attraction, appreciation and appropriation is in full swing depending on the experiential element.

The following of anything or anyone by someone presupposes a process of liking, loving and living. This is very true in the case of evangelisation as well. Evangelisation is the sharing of good news, which is, indeed, a joyful experience for the missionary. Jesus is our ideal and model in this regard, "Go and tell John what you hear and see" (Matthew 11: 4). Elsewhere Jesus reveals the reason for his witnessing, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete" (John 15: 11).

The experience of joy and happiness is a result of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling. It means that happiness is a result of one's relationship with reality. The reality is multifaceted. As one comes closer to the reality, so it remains a greater mystery. The importance of sense perception for establishing a relationship with the reality is unquestionable. As one sees, hears, touches, tastes and smells, so the person gathers knowledge and joy. As far as the question of evangelisation is concerned, it is of great importance to encounter and experience the

mystery of Christ, which is the source of joy. Nothing can substitute this experience in the life of a missionary. And every Christian is a missionary. The characteristic feature of Christians is their experience of and their witness to their happiness in the Lord, even when they are persecuted. Jesus said, "Rejoice and be glad" (Matthew 5: 12).

As far as liturgy is concerned, it offers the participants an immediate and experiential knowledge about the mystery of Christian faith in the context of the covenant community. In the liturgy there is something is audible, visible, tangible, palatable, and worthy to smell. This means there is enough food for the senses to experience and enjoy the mystery of faith, provided the worshipping community follows the instructions of the Church. There is a perfect harmony between intellectual and emotional quotients in the liturgy. The liturgy is a remembrance and representation of the saving event, having actions to be seen, hymns, orations, bells, etc. to be heard, exchange of peace to be shared through gentle and noble touch of hands, fragrance to be smelled and purified, the Eucharistic mysteries to be tasted. So there is an elaborate arrangement for a personal and communal experience of the mystery of salvation. The thanksgiving prayer proper to the faithful (Qurbana, 70-71) elaborately illustrates the importance and inevitability of hands, lips, ears, eyes, tongues, feet, and body for the experiential celebration of the mysteries leading towards a transformed presence in the world. There is a list of information, formation and transformation attached to each of the members of the body. This is a clear

testimony to the truth and worth of human body and five senses to have an experiential knowledge of the mystery of Christ. It is the apostolic experience of the mystery, which has been handed on to us from generation to generation through the celebration of the Qurbana. It is for our contemplation, participation and transformation. It is through our transformed presence in the world that we shall succeed in Christian witnessing for the transformation of the world.

### Conclusion

The role of the liturgy is pivotal in Christian witnessing. In the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, there is the genuine communication of, communion in and commitment to the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation. There is the live corporate corporeal transmission of the mystery of Christian faith towards a transforming experience and concomitant transfigured presence of the Lord in the world for the glorification of God, sanctification of human beings and transformation of the whole world. In other words, the Christian witnessing does not consist in the instruction of the abstract concepts or marketing of some utopian ideas, but fundamentally and primarily,

it is a sharing of our redeemed and redeeming existence and experience in Christ, which is a sacramental presence of the Lord in the Church for the world. The transfigured presence of Christians in the world is the desirable goal of the liturgical celebrations in the Church. Through their sacramental touch, Christians accelerate the transformation of the world. This is the faithful, meaningful and joyful Christian witnessing.

The role of the liturgy in Christian witnessing is to offer the participants the *anubhava jnana*, the experiential knowledge of the redemption in Christ through signs and symbols. This leads to a transforming experience. It requires and enables the faithful to be a transformed presence in the world. We are called to be the ministers of the transforming presence in the Church for the world. This is the privilege and the challenge Christians face in the changing scenario of India today. "May He bestow His mercy and blessings on us, on the whole world, and on the holy Church and all her children. Now, always and forever" Amen.

परमधाम में परमेश्वर की महिमा ।  
पृथ्वी पर मानवों को शांति शुभ आशा ॥





# Theology - A Constructive Reflection of History Tribute to Fr. Placid J. Podipara C.M.I

*Dr. Johnson Vadakkumcherry*

## Introduction

**R**ev. Dr. Placid J. Podipara C.M.I. Ph.D., D.D., D.C.L.(1899-1985), has made significant contribution in the making of today's Syro-Malabar Church (SMC). Here is an attempt to show how he accompanied the Church he loved most, how he kept pace with the demands of time and helped in the formation of the Thomas Christians in India in Catholic features. He was a great visionary, who tried to build up the historical, canonical, liturgical, spiritual and theological aspects of the Church. His engagement with the SMC consisted of his daring and constructive approach to the facts and events in the history of that Church, and it was to be perfected by his followers in sincerity and truth. To explore the liturgical allusions, canonical questions and points of debates on any particular theme of the SMC is not the intent of this article rather it is only an attempt to see how Podipara made profit of the historical opportunities in his life.

## Podipara – A Man of History

When Podipara's life (1899-1985) is paralleled to the first century of the SMC after its rebirth (1887), one can understand how sensible and judicious he was in his works and

contributions in their multifarious forms. His formation both in his traditional family, Arpookara (today's Villoonni near to Mannanam) and early studies at the well-known St. Ephrem's Mannanam rendered him sober in life. He entered the nearby Carmelite monastery at the age of twenty and later he continued his priestly formation at St. Joseph's Mangalore. Formation in various seminaries helped him understand objectively the diversity of various rites and cultures in a tolerant spirit. Podipara accompanied the newly born SMC in heart and mind, and he was ordained priest in the year 1927.

Much is commended on Podipara especially about his contributions and stands on various issues in the important historical moments of the Church in India. Having acquired three doctorates in philosophy, theology and canon law,<sup>1</sup> he stands as a pioneer of the ecclesiology of communion in the modern SMC - a communion built up after learning from the past and profiting from the present events. The historical events which Podipara made use of for building up such an ecclesiology are: the Council of Ephesus (431), the Council of Chalcedon (451), the

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<sup>1</sup> Doctorates: in Philosophy from the *St. Thomas Academy*; Theology from *College of the Procurators General of Religious Order under Sacri Pallati Apostolici*; and in Canon Law from *Appollinaris Faculty*. St. Thomas Academy is today known as University of *Angelicum* - the others are extinct.

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Vatican II (1962-65) and the 19<sup>th</sup> centenary celebration of the martyrdom of St. Thomas in 1972. The first two events are in reference to the reuniting Orthodox, while the third was about his contribution to the Vatican II, especially to *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (OE), especially in the defining of the sections on the “rights and duties” of the Eastern Catholic Churches. In 1972, Podipara tried to assert scientifically the apostolic origin of the Church of St. Thomas Christians. The apostolic origin of the Thomas Christians is the common platform on which all the Indians can proudly stand.

For nearly a quarter of a century at the Pontifical Oriental Institute (1957-1977) as mentor to many students, among whom some future bishops, Podipara’s contribution remains significant due to his way of looking at history. Though not a theologian in the strict sense, Podipara’s reflection on history has made him truly one. As *Consultor* to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and *peritus* of the Vatican II, he made a notable influence in the elaboration of the OE, which emphasized the individuality of each particular Church. Podipara dedicated his life for a genuine return of his Church to its original spirit and form – both in genotypic and phenotypic accentuations.

## Podipara and the Syro-Malankara Church

Podipara participated actively in the reunion movements of the Malankara Orthodox faithful by following them closely, chiefly through his talks and writings about the facts and figures of their Church. *Antiochia Patriarchis* or the Patriarch of Antioch (1930), *Paurasthya Sabbakal* or The Eastern Churches (1930), *Ephesus Sunabadossom Roma Marppappayum* or Papal Primacy and the Council of Ephesus (1931), *The Ephesus Sunabadoss* or The Council of Ephesus (1932), *Marppappayude Paramadhikaravum Apramadittavum* or The Primacy and Infallibility of the Pope (1933) etc. are some of the books in which he clarified about the primacy of the Roman Pontiff and the unity under him. He explained the historical theological merits of being Catholic in the articles such as “*Deyvamathavum Yakobayavisuasavum*” or The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Jacobite Faith (1928) and “*Akatholikkavathangalkku Katholicka Prathyutharam*” or Catholic answers to non-Catholic Assertions (1931).

“The Catholic guild in the Malankara Catholic Church especially for the catechism teachers and learned laity was founded and organized with the inspiration of Fr. Placid. In this connection he had published many books.”<sup>2</sup> He had been widely accepted, in the

<sup>2</sup> C. BASELIUS, “Fr. Placid –Cherished Memories”, in *Placidachan* (PN) 140. In V. Pathikulangara, *Placidachan* (ed) 1995. Here-after PN. This is one of the resourceful works on Podipara. It contains three documents of Podipara and fifteen articles by various Scholars. PN was published as a souvenir to commemorate the tenth death anniversary (April 27 1995) of Very Rev. Prof. DDDr. Placid Joseph Podipara; *Collected Works of Rev.Dr. Placid J.Podipara C.M.I.* in five volumes edited by Fr. Thomas Kalayil and published by Sanjos Mannanam, 2008 provides us with authentic and documented information about the SMC in thematic order.



Malankara Church as a constant consultor and advisor, especially of the hierarchs of the Malankara Catholic Church in matters of theology, canon law, liturgy and church history. The two volumes of Podipara published successively under the title *De Fontibus Juris Canonici Syro-Malankerensium* (- *Codificazione Canonica Orientale. Fonti*), 1937&1940, do remain a masterpiece of Podipara's scholarship, as well as a source book of the history of the Thomas Christians.<sup>3</sup> The fact that he was asked to evaluate the liturgical texts of the reuniting Malankara Church shows his competence in the field of liturgy. So he was a historian, philosopher, canonist, liturgist – a theologian with full measure of scholarship and pledge for communion.

His repeated writings on the Council Ephesus (431) in 1931, was timely due to its historical and theological significance. In his *Mariology of the East* (1980) he explains the theology of the Assyrian Church and the historical-theological aberrations developed in history due to the lack of learning and understanding of history. In 1951, he wrote *Kalkadonia Sunahadossum Yakobaya Sabodarangalaum* or the Council of Chalcedone, recollecting what happened in the year 451. The historical deviation of the Monophysites from the Catholic communion due to non-theological reasons are obvious in the above works. Podipara's knowledge about the

particular Churches made him endeavor for the building of the Malankara Church. He pointed out that the sustenance and ecclesial growth of these apostolic Churches are essential for the growth of the universal Church – as announced in the papal documents of the time.

### **Podipara – Founder of the Modern Syro-Malabar Church**

In the year 1928, Podipara was sent to Rome for higher studies and in two years he acquired three doctorates.<sup>4</sup> Returning to Kerala in 1930, he was appointed professor of the Carmelite monastery at Chethippuzha until he was called back to Rome in 1954. After reaching Rome he started his mission of providing a scientific and academic foundation for the Indian Church. His initiative in beginning the Malabar College in Rome and to be its first rector (1958) reveals his intellectual acumen and leadership. The students of the Malabar Church were first lodged in the Ukrainian College (St. Josephath). Then it was shifted to the adjacent Romanian College, from where it was finally shifted to the present Damascene College, Via Carlo Emanuele 1, 46 on 27 April 1993.<sup>5</sup> He helped the students intellectually, facilitated them to identify the unclear areas of the SMC and make researches for a scientific and effective consolidation of the same Church. Together with his scholarly

<sup>3</sup> E. R. HAMBYE, "Fr. Placid - An Historian", PN 222.

<sup>4</sup> In those years a scientific paper of about 40 - 50 pages along with the completion of prescribed requirements on particular topics was enough to obtain degree of doctorate, unlike long schedules by the modern universities and institutes.

<sup>5</sup> J. VADAKKUMCHERRY, *Podipara's Vision of the Church Hindu in culture, Christian in religion Oriental in Worship*, doctoral dissertation (unpublished) defended in PIO 2005. 32.

disciples, Podipara worked for identifying the historical and theological basis of his mother Church and its traditions and promises.

Besides the Roman College, the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam is also established under the direct influence of Podipara. In his "Memorandum to His Eminence Eugene Cardinal Tisserant he writes: "The Syro-Malabarians have no Major Seminary of their own." Distressed with the historical and liturgical poverty found in the common seminaries he appeals for "a separate central Major Seminary exclusively for the Orientals".<sup>6</sup> Built in 1962, the seminary at Kottayam stands as a symbol of the ecclesiology of communion of particular Churches. Podipara gave much importance to the formation and leadership training of the future priests.

Podipara's access to the Roman Congregations<sup>7</sup> enabled him to engineer the growing SMC, particularly in the historical findings and development. His life in Rome from 1954 to 1980 was one of intellectual pursuit both individually and in groups of scholars from India and abroad. His works *Die Thomas-Christen* (1966), *The Thomas Christians* (1970) is the first scientific work about the SMC in the West. He construed the Church in multiple forms, the most important of which

is the forming of scholars and leaders for his Church. His long teaching career at the Pontifical Oriental Institute gained for him many friends who widened and deepened his investigations. He wrote more than any one else about the SMC in various languages; of course with the help of his co-workers. The *Fontes, Varthamanapusthakam* or The travel account of the Syro-Malabar priest Thomas Kathanar, *The Thomas Christians* (1970), *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church* (1976), *The Rise and Decline of the Thomas Christians* (1980) and "*Les Syriens du Malabar*" (1956) are some of his works, where history unfolded itself to the West.<sup>8</sup>

*The Canonical Sources of the Malabar Church* (1986) is Podipara's book edited by Fr. X. Koodappuzha and published by OIRSI (104), one year after the former's death. The manuscript was from Podipara's teaching tool at the Pontifical Oriental Institute Rome during 1957 - 1977. In the Institute he taught canon law, dogmatic theology and ecclesiology in reference to the Church of Thomas Christians. Podipara's commitment to his Church inspired him to shape the same according to the canonical prerogatives and obligations.

"Fr. Placid has played a very significant role in the establishment and in the progress of the diocese of Tellicherry as a Consultor

<sup>6</sup> Fr. Placid's Memorandum to His Eminence Eugene cardinal Tisserant submitted at the Bishop's House Thiruvalla, Nov.26,1953. PN 13-27. V. Pathikulangara points Te St. Thomas Apostolic seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, is the result of this desire and request. PN 17.

<sup>7</sup> Podipara was *Consultor* of the Pontifical Congregation for Oriental Churches (1952-1972), Member of the Special Commission for Liturgical Rrestoration, (appointed by Pius XII., the other members were Alphons Raes S.J., Korolevskij and Emmanuel Delly under the guidance of Cardinal Tisserant), Consultor of the Pontifical Commisison for Preparing the Agenda of Vatican II, *Peritus* at the Vatican II, and professor at the Pontifical Oriental Institute (1957-1977).

<sup>8</sup> E. R. HAMBYE, "Fr. Placid - Historian", PN 224 - 225.



to the Congregation for Oriental Churches in Rome.”<sup>9</sup> Starting with the establishment of the diocese of Tellicherry in 1954 and founding of the exarchate of Chanda (N. India) in 1962, Podipara began the ecclesiastical organization and perfection of the SMC which is still under construction. The objections to extension of the Syro-Malabar territory (Syro-Malabar Jurisdiction outside the Malayalam speaking areas), and to double jurisdiction still aflame in certain parts of the country refer to the canonical imperfections – which require the immediate and serious attention of all true Church lovers. The mission of the Syro-Malabarians in their own rite is practically impossible even today due to internal and external reasons. It is important to keep in mind that these were the appeals in Podipara’s “Memeorandum” in 1953.<sup>10</sup> The “rights and duties” underlined in OE 3 is still in the hope of achieved in the SMC, even within their country. The All India jurisdiction of the head of the SMC is withheld on geographical, sociological and pastoral grounds to the neglect of theological and ecclesiological deliberations.

The important events in the history of the Church reflect Podipara’s toil and hard work. In the three events of 1962 – the Vatican II, establishment of the exarchate of Chanda, and the establishment of St. Thomas Apostolic seminary, Kottayam, Podipara’s influence as an

ecclesiological visionary is evident. As an expert of the Vatican II, his contribution in the elaboration of OE needs more recognition. “A *peritus* did not have the right to speak or vote in the Council. If there came up in the Council discussions any point adversely affecting the Eastern Church in India, Fr. Placid would take note of it and would prepare a document elucidating the exact nature of the issue and defending the rights of the Oriental Bishops to speak it out in the Council the next day.”<sup>11</sup> “Fr. Placid could somehow convince the responsible persons in Vatican that the Oriental Churches also have an equal right to do mission work according to their own Rites and expand their Churches. Thus Chanda, Satna, Sagar, Ujjain, Jagadapur, Bijanore, Rajkot and Ghorakhpur were erected as mission eparchies in course of time and were entrusted to the SMC.”<sup>12</sup> “St. Thomas Seminary at Vadavathoor, a long cherished dream of our forebears, owes its very existence to a large extent to Fr. Placid.”<sup>13</sup> The ecclesiology of the time - Church as communion of Churches, urged him argue for the well knit formation for particular Churches. The forceful and resourceful building the Church will take place only in seminaries. Podipara who knew history filled up the historical lacunae contemplating on the past, positioning the present and pointing to the future.

<sup>9</sup> T. KALAYIL, “The Profile of a Prophet, My Reminiscence of Fr. Placid Podipara CMI”, PN 337.

<sup>10</sup> PODIPARA, “Memorandum”, PN 18-24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem* 344; X. KOODAPUZHA, “Fr. Placid’s Ecclesiology” PN, 239-240. “Fr. Placid has made a unique contribution to the Second Vatican Council especially in the formulation of the decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* for the Oriental Churches...OE no. 3 which was formulated taking into account the unjust situation in India.”

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem* 338.

<sup>13</sup> J. KOIKAKUDY, “Fr. Placid – a Canonist”, PN 300.

In the year 1972, celebrating the 19<sup>th</sup> centenary of the martyrdom of St. Thomas Podipara wrote *The Thomas Christians* (1970), *The Individuality of the Malabar Church* (1972), *Kerala Sabbayude Vyakthithuam* (1972) and *The Malabar Christians* (1972). The truly apostolic Church of the Thomas Christians in India has every right to celebrate its life because of its strong roots, profoundness in history, liturgical tradition, canonical institution, theological openness and spiritual inheritance.

Of course, Podipara's ecclesiological axiom that the Thomas Christians in India is "Hindu in culture, Christian in religion, Oriental in worship"<sup>14</sup> is not merely a point of arrival and departure. This is his most important theological saying. This axiom was published on various occasions in books and articles. According to Podipara though in faith and Rite the Thomas Christians differed among themselves, still all the Thomas Christians were substantially the same in their ancient Indo-Oriental mind and outlook. After criticizing the excessive Latin type of training in the seminaries, Podipara says that the Thomas Christians of SMC have "the duty now more than ever before to show their non-Christian brethren that an Indo-Oriental expression, too, is not incompatible with genuine Christianity and that such an expression has always been India's from the very beginning of Christianity."<sup>15</sup> Commenting on their specific

duty and task he continues: "They could also develop a specifically Indo-Oriental approach to theology by the aid of the S. Scripture, of the Oriental (especially Syrian) liturgies and of the Oriental Patristic tradition baptizing also the great philosophic thoughts of India. In this latter case they can take pride as any of their neighbours that Sankara, probably the greatest philosopher of India, was a son of Malabar."<sup>16</sup> Podipara's contribution is not a work completed but something to be continued and perfected by his ardent followers.

Though the Church of Thomas Christians received its bishops successively from the Churches of Persia proper and Mesopotamia "it was not an output or an integral part of these Churches. It gloried in its Apostolic origin and had its own customs and discipline based on the Malabar way of life. Keeping intact the East Syriac Liturgy which it received from the above Churches it enriched it by modifying and Christianizing the Hindu way of life familiar to the Malabarians."<sup>17</sup> From the very beginning the Malabar Church had been at home in Malabar soil with its own hierarchy, liturgy etc. and had therefore the individuality distinct from that of all other Particular Churches – "it was entirely Indo Oriental."<sup>18</sup>

Podipara's writings in 1972 on the Apostle St. Thomas were to show the importance of the apostolic individuality of

<sup>14</sup> This article was first published in *Ostkirchliche Studien* 1959, 89-104, The same article formed part of the book, *The Malabar Christians*, 1972, 27-54. This book was translated in to Malayalam *Kerala Sabbayude Vyakthithuam* in the same year.

<sup>15</sup> PODIPARA, *The Malabar Christians*, 54.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem* 54.

<sup>17</sup> PODIPARA, *The Individuality of the Malabar Church*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem* 3.



the Malabar Church. According to him "it is a precious treasure to be jealously guarded. Not all particular Churches or any missionary Church can claim a direct apostolic origin and distinct continuity as the Malabar Church can. How many Churches wish they had such a status!!<sup>19</sup> The most important contribution of Podipara to the Thomas Christians can be identified as historical and theological. Its apostolic identity is the common platform upon which the true Christian unity can be tested and testified. A real and truthful search into the tradition of this apostolic Church shall concentrate more on the Tradition than get stumbled on traditions.

### Conclusion

In this essay an attempt is made to know the particular characteristic of Podiappa as an ecclesial visionary. His contribution was historical and theological. He was a man for unity and identity of the Thomas Christians in

India, and he made all efforts for the perfection of the Catholic Churches in India according to the ecclesiology of communion delineated in Vatican II. He tried to be factual and realistic, and the means he adopted was analytic and interpretative of historical events and helped theology to get concretized. He was not a Karl Rahner, but a true Thomas Christian who adopted the *marga* or way theology from the Indian soil. With his personal capabilities and initiatives he could transport the Thomas Christians to firm historical resolutions. His contribution to the Syro-Malankara and the Syro-Malabar Churches as a visionary of the universal Church is certainly of high esteem. The 'founder' and 'architect' or in other words the "father" of the modern Syro-Malabar Church (SMC), who remains one in line with the fathers of the Church, will be honoured if we follow him sincerely recognizing and honouring his greatness.<sup>20</sup>



<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem* 14.

<sup>20</sup> J. POWATHIL, "Fr. Placid – As I Know Him," PN 128.

# News

## **Killing of Fr. Thomas Pandipally, cmi**

**T**he Christian Community in Andhra Pradesh was once again terribly shaken by the brutal murder of one of its pastors and missionaries. Fr. Thomas Pandipally, aged 38, a Catholic Priest working in the Archdiocese of Hyderabad, was ruthlessly assassinated on the night of August 16th 2008 on the way back to his residence after the Eucharistic service at a substation of Yellareddy parish, in Nizamabad District, Andhra Pradesh.

Fr. Thomas Pandipally CMI was born in the year 1971 to late Mr. Mathew and Mrs. Saramma at Monippally in Kottayam district, Kerala. He joined the religious order of the Carmelite Missionaries of Immaculate (CMI) in the mission province of Chanda with its headquarters at Bellampally in Adilabad (Dt) in the year 1987 and took his first religious vows in 1992. He completed his B.Sc in Christ College, Bangalore, in 1997. He did his studies in Philosophy in Darshana Institute, Wardha, and completed his Theological studies at Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. After his college and priestly studies he was ordained a priest in the year 2002.

Denouncing the brutal murder of the Carmelite missionary Thomas Pandipally, Archbishop Marampudi Joji of Hyderabad, who is also the Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Bishops' Council (APBC) and Executive Vice-President of Andhra Pradesh Federation of Churches, stated: "Father Thomas is a martyr; he sacrificed his life for the poor and marginalized. He did not die in vain, because his body and his blood enrich the Church in India, particularly the Church in Andhra Pradesh.

## **Bishop Hippolytus Kunnunkal OFM Cap. Passed Away**

Bishop Hippolytus Kunnunkal OFM Cap, former bishop of the diocese of Jammu-Srinagar, passed away on August 9, at Assisi Ashram, Bharananganam, Kerala, after a prolonged illness. Born on March 14, 1921, he made his religious profession on 11 April 1945, and was ordained a priest on 11 April 1951. He was appointed Prefect Apostolic of Jammu-Kashmir on 28 December, 1978. He was consecrated bishop of the diocese of Jammu-Kashmir on 29th June 1986. He retired in 1998. His funeral was on 12th August, Tuesday, 2008.

## **Life Must Be Defended From Conception to Death**

"Any attempt against human life cheapens our attitude towards life as a whole. Today we face a culture of death and must assert forcefully our respect for life, especially for those not yet born," said Mgr Agnelo Gracias (Chairman of the Family Commission of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India) as he spoke out in the case of Niketa and Haresh Mehta, a case

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that has divided India. Recently the Bombay High Court rejected the couple's plea to abort their 26-week-old foetus after it was diagnosed with a congenital disorder. Under Indian law abortion is legal up to the 20th week of pregnancy and only if the life of the mother is in danger. A committee set up by the High Court said that it was not certain that the child would be born with a handicap, as court proceedings centred on the child's "quality of life" with the parents asking for the right to have an abortion as a "question of social justice," rejecting offers to have the child adopted at the end of the pregnancy. In the end the court ruled that there could be no exception to the law, especially when the handicap was uncertain. From an ethical point of view, life for us is sacred from conception. There is no scientific difference between a foetus that is 25-week-old or older, fully formed, and a baby a few days old.



### Bishop Hippolytus Kannumkal OFM Cap Passed Away

Bishop Hippolytus Kannumkal OFM Cap former bishop of the Diocese of Jomun-  
Singapore passed away on August 14, 1997, at his home in Jomun, Singapore. He was 82 years old.  
Bishop Hippolytus was born on April 14, 1915, in Jomun, Singapore. He was ordained a priest on April 11, 1941, and became a bishop on December 28, 1975. He was the first bishop of the Diocese of Jomun-Singapore.  
His funeral was held on August 15, 1997, at the Jomun Cathedral.

### Life Must Be Defended From Conception to Birth

"Any attempt against human life changes our attitude towards life as a whole. Today we  
live a culture of death and must exert ourselves to respect for life, especially for those not  
yet born," said Mr. Angelo Ceresa, Chairman of the Family Foundation of the Diocese of Jomun-Singapore.  
of Catholic Bishops of India) as he spoke out in the case of India and Pakistan. He said: